

Narrative Report for 1958  
Mayreld Swanson

DEC 17 1958

This has been a rewarding year for me, personally. A Master's in Education in June, thanks to a leave of absence and a scholarship from The Board of National Missions. With it, all the attending good experiences of new places, people, friends, and values in thinking.

Highlights of the year;

Visiting in and observing Sunday Church Schools and Youth groups in several different churches. Talking with and working with the Director's of Christian Ed in some, seeing their work, comparing churches gave me a new appreciation and concern for the work of our Church; gave me a better understanding of the work, place and value of the Director; and helped to clarify for me my approach to the work I would be doing in the future.

Two weeks in the Audubon Camp in California. Being with this group of people who love the out-of-doors, who are of one mind with regards conservation in all areas of nature, and studying under professional naturalists, at first hand albeit so briefly, some of the intricacies and glories of God's creative works, was an experience that will be a part of me for all years to come. And it helped to strengthen my background for helping our church school teachers to bring ~~these~~ an awareness of these things into the class room.

Two weeks at the Lab. school in Caldwell, Idaho. The time spent with our workers here helped to tied together various learnings and conclusions from the above experiences in the churches and seemed to finish off preparation for the new work.

Getting on with the work of Lend-Lease Counseling, to which I had been looking forward for several months. Realizing as less than a week remains of the second of my assignments, that there is a tremendous need for this kind of work, greatly pleased thus far with the response of many people, and hoping that results will endure among leaders with regards the church program, but beyond that as something of their vision and dedication "wears off" and becomes a part of the lives of the boys and girls they teach. More and more the impression is borne in upon me of the vital job of witnessing the church has to do - each one in its own community. The eyes of the community are certainly on it whether or not they are sympathetic eyes.

Statistics

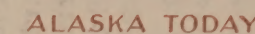
Statistically there is not much to report in the four months.

	<u>No. meetings</u>	<u>No. participants</u>	<u>Total</u>
Planning sessions with teachers	43	32	1
Demonstrations and teaching with teachers	14	19	
Planning with Sessions of Churches	6	16	
Planning with Trustees	2	15	
Planning with W. F. advisers & ministers	5	4	
Organization of new groups (C. E. Comm.)	3	9	
and departments (Nursery & Cradel Roll)	4	5	
Meetings with Women's groups	5	36	
Family Night participation	3	170	
Christian Ed. Conference (All Day)	1	60	
Open House and Curriculum preview for parents	2	70	
Planning with superintendents	7	3	
Recruiting and visitation	35		

*Mayreld Swanson*



## A stylized illustration of a totem pole featuring a bird at the top, a figure in the middle, and a bear at the base, set against a background of mountains and trees.



Alaska today is beset with many acute problems. Because of her strategic position, military developments are extensive. The sudden impact of western civilization requires many adjustments for the more primitive population of the Arctic. Statehood is definitely on its way, but with privilege and monopoly still entrenched, and the question of native rights and the vast unsettled, economic opportunity is limited, the vast winning of the rich natural resources inaccessible. Frustration manifests itself in alcohol, gambling and prostitution.

*Presbyterians have a long and honored tradition in Alaska, having started the first American Protestant work in the Territory (1877). Today Presbyterians have the largest mission program in the Panhandle, and are increasing responsibility in the Central Interior region and the Arctic Coast. There are 31 organized Presbyterian churches, Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau (Northern Light), and Sitka are self-supporting. There are 52 other preaching stations, total church membership of over three thousand includes Indians, Eskimos, whites, Negroes, and Oriental Americans. Sunday school enrollment is over 3,300. There are interdenominational churches at Sitka, Wrangell, Craig, Haines, Ketchikan, Juneau, and Fairbanks. Institutions include a children's home at Haines, a junior college\* at Sitka, and a hospital at Palmer. There are 82 Presbyterian missionaries in Alaska.*

Naval petroleum projects have brought western civilization and modern gadgets to primitive Eskimo life. Barrow church has celebrated its 50th anniversary.

*Eskimo lay worker at those points serves fellow Eskimos as well as American Army personnel.*

Here are the vast, unpopulated wastes of the tundra.

Reindeer were first introduced  
into Alaska by Sheldon Jackson.

*The Alaska Highway  
is served by a Sunday  
school missionary at  
all points in Alaska.*

*Influx of homesteaders into this agricultural area has increased population as well as the need for more ministers.*

*Haines House for children is here.*

*The Northern Light Church is the oldest self-supporting church in the Territory.*

*First Protestant church in Alaska still standing here.*

The "Princeton-Hall" is the connecting link between the churches and institutions of the presbytery, transporting missionaries, sacraments, and many people throughout the area.

Mount Edgecumbe  
Government School

Home of Sheldon  
Jackson Junior College.

*The Panhandle is a land of many islands and many boats, of sheer snow-capped mountains and icy glaciers, of old Indian culture and modern industries.*

SIBERIA

Here is Russia, a mere 45 miles from our westernmost mission.

*The boundary between East and West is also the boundary between yesterday and today.*

### KEY

- Town with one organized church
- Town with two organized churches
- Town with three organized churches
- Preaching point
- School or other institution
- Alaska Railroad
- Alaska Highway and branches





attractively arranged and the children and teachers are delighted. I taught with the Kindergarten teachers that Sunday and I wish you could have seen those youngsters respond to the use of new equipment and methods. New and untrained teachers are often timid about singing without the use of a piano, and about using anything but the "sit-in-a-row-and-color-crayon methods" but these joined with me and saw things happening and it was not so difficult either. "The room teaches" is one my pet bits of philosophy. They tell children that teachers, parents and leaders care, or that they do not care. I have a feeling that this building will be completed before long.

Before I leave Skagway I will meet with the Women's Executive committee, some of the parents, and youth advisers. I am also to get the new/organized Christian Ed. committee to functioning. This gives you a fair idea of what my work involves.

A good deal of my time is given to the training of Church School teachers. Each week I meet with the teachers of each department to help them plan the coming Sundays session. I also teach with the teachers in a different department every Sunday. Also help the advisers of youth groups to plan some of their sessions - participating with them and the young people. This I love as well as the S.S. teaching as it give me an opportunity to get acquainted with the children and young people.

A necessary part of training is getting in and doing the work myself, since I can "see" things as they could be. So - setting up a supply room, so there need be no cluttered shelves in the class rooms; creating a picture file, just plain "house-cleaning" shelves and closets, setting up and re-arranging classrooms and furniture, trimming and mounting old soiled pictures, installing interest tables, bringing in bouquets of lovely fall leaves and mosses or flowers (depending on time of year), helping teachers and children become aware of the beauty and perfection in the common things of God's out-of-doors, and repainting walls and furniture - all become a part of the job of training. In ketchikan I was amused and interested when one of the women who was helping with some of the painting, asked me if painting rooms is a part of my job. I am certain that no one in Christian service ever gives the many odd jobs and details involved in their work not included in a "job analysis" any thought. I am sure the Mosers - (minister and his wife there) do not. Many evenings they hired baby sitters so they could assist - painting and all. I have heard some ministers in this country many times joke about the fact that they were not trained in Seminary to be carpenters, plumbers, mechanics, furnace men, et cetera. Certainly anything that contributes to a warm spiritual experience and to the Christian growth of children, youth, adults and their leaders, is a part of any Director's job.

My first week in Skagway was just plain fun. The first Sunday I observed classes and looked over the church school plant- the old in which they were at present situated, and the new, almost finished Christian Ed. unit. The work on this building had been stymied for about two years for various and sundry reasons. Folks had become discouraged and there it sat with classes meeting in a large, cold recreation hall, two classes meeting in the sanctuary, another in the choir room, and with accompanying discipline problems. I met with the Session on Monday night and my first question was, - When can the Church School move in to the new class rooms? - Comments about-not finished,-walls not painted,- - - you mean they can be used? I assured them the rooms were clean, new and warm. After further discussion one elder said, "Well, why don't we move in? All we need to do is get the lumber and equipment out of the way. Might as well get them ready for Sunday." On Tuesday night the Trustees and Building committee agreed and that was all it took. Just a bit of urging from one outsider. The rooms will be so nice when they are painted but they are already